

A
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to the pre-
cious and
right II, if
you are boy?

God has given to us, I know well, the liberty of use, but only so far as necessary; and He has determined that the use should be common. And it is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want. How much more glorious is it to do good to many, than to live sumptuously! How much wiser to spend money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! How much more useful to acquire decorous friends, than lifeless ornaments! Whom have lands ever benefited so much as concerning favours has? It remains for us, therefore, to be true with our allegance: The more will have the more sumptuous, and the simpler? Men, I would say, if they make use of them impartially and indifferently. But if it be impossible for all to exercise self-restraint, yet with a view to the use of what is necessary, we must seek after what can be most readily procured, bidding a long farewell to these superfluities.

Miguel
7
Bancero
Santero
Alor y
difer
y las
mujeres
Lombia

Justice: Extrapolations from the Concept Mishpat in the Book of Micah

Michael Candelaria

El significado de esta hora

Samuel Pagán

In the Depths of the Well, Looking at the Stars

Ariel Zambrano

Reseña bibliográfica

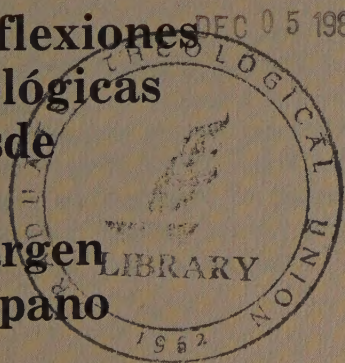
But the love of ornament, which is far from caring for virtue, but claims the body for itself, when the love of the beautiful has changed to empty show, is to be utterly expelled.

"With childish folly to the war he came,
Laden with store of gold."¹

¹ *Iliad*, ii. 872.

i el Antiguo

**Reflexiones
teológicas
desde
el
margen
hispano**



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PRESENTACION:

Con este número terminamos nuestro tercer año de publicación. Al recordar las primeras conversaciones y reuniones, en que **Apuntes** no era sino un sueño, sin siquiera nombre, no podemos sino maravillarnos y regocijarnos en los tres años pasados. La revista ha recibido entre nuestro pueblo y sus pastores una acogida que nos ha sorprendido favorablemente. Por ello, por los artículos que nos han sido enviados, por las discusiones que se han engendrado —en fin, por toda suerte de apoyo— estamos agradecidos, y aprovechamos este medio para expresar esa gratitud. Al mismo tiempo, invitamos a todos nuestros lectores a incorporarse al diálogo que nuestra revista representa: diálogo con las Escrituras, diálogo entre nosotros, diálogo con el resto de la iglesia y su teología. Si tal diálogo cobra fuerza, consideraremos nuestros esfuerzos más que compensados.

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Justice: Extrapolations from the Concept *Mishpat* in the Book of Micah

Michael Candelaria

The eighth century Hebrew prophets were exegetes of history and existence.¹ They were filled with the 'ruach Yahweh' (spirit of God). Their utterances and oracles unveil the interpretative word of God's redemptive acts in history. This is not naive biblicism, but an acknowledgment that the apex of the political consciousness of God's historical activity was reached by the Hebrew prophets and the Christian apostles, and their interpretation of reality should serve as the starting point for hermeneutical methodology and give direction to critical reflection on the historical praxis of human liberation.

Critical reflection on justice, then, should begin with the ethical preaching of Israel's eighth century prophets. The theme of justice (**mishpat**) played a key role in their prophetic proclamations and denunciations. Western and Greek conceptions of justice fall short of the depth, the scope, and the value of the prophetic preaching of **mishpat**. Amos, the shepherd from Tekoa, petitioned for justice (**mishpat**) to "roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream" (5:24). He gave charge that **mishpat** be established in the gates, the provincial courts (5:15). Hosea, the son of Beeri, admonished Ephraim and Judah to "observe kindness and justice" (12:6). Isaiah, the son of Amoz, defined justice in concrete terms as the reproving of the ruthless, the defending of the orphan, and the pleading for the widow (1:17). He portrayed justice as an attribute of Yahweh (30:18). Micah insisted on the doing of justice as the center of the cultus (6:8).

Micah was primarily a prophet of judgment and justice. He came from the village outpost of Moresath, a satellite village of Gath located about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem in the western foothills. Micah is a type of the Hispanic-American religious spokesperson. He lived outside of the political-economic center of Jerusalem, on the periphery of the system, in the margin of society. Yet, he challenged the totality (to use Enrique Dussel's terminology). He denounced the oppressive structures of sin headed by the political, economic, and religious dominators. He condemned the status quo as a system of injustice and violence directed against the working class, the poor of the land, the people of God.

Micah prophesied judgment and destruction to the cities of Israel and Judah (ch. 1). He pronounced woe upon the rich and powerful who robbed the poor of their homes and fields (2:1, 2). He denounced the political heads of Judah for failing in the public administration of justice (3:1). He portrayed the false prophets as corrupt and greedy, while he claimed to have the "ruach Yahweh" and the sense of justice (3:8). He gave the classic expression of the eighth century prophetic conception of religion with justice at the center of the cultus rather than the sacrifices (6:8). Finally, he portrayed justice salvifically as an eschatological hope (7:9).

Three extrapolations can be drawn from the use of **mishpat** (justice) in the book of Micah to serve as theologico-ethical points of departure for the Hispanic community's **kerygma** (prophetic proclamation of God's redemptive acts), **koinonia** (fellowship of the people of God), **diakonia** (service to the world), **didache** (redemptive education and "conscientization"), and **leitourgia** (adoration and cultus). First of all, the prophetic denunciation of injustice arises from a charismatic sense of justice. Secondly, the ethical praxis of justice is ontologically grounded in love. Finally, justice can be anticipated as the eschatological hope of liberation.

A charismatic sense of justice

The term **mishpat** occurs first, in the book of Micah, in chapter three. This chapter contains three strophes of four verses each (vv. 1-4, 5-8, 9-12). **Mishpat** is the key word in each strophe (vv. 1, 8, and 9). Micah denounced the public leaders for disregarding the implementation of justice:

And I said,

Hear now, heads of Jacob

And rulers of the house of Israel.

Is it not for you to know justice (**mishpat**)? (3:1)

The duty of the public officials was to know the right juridical decision and to implement justice. Leslie Allen says that the leaders were to be the "watchdogs of public welfare and the guardians of the old morality."² It was incumbent upon them to know and to practice **mishpat**.

Mishpat is an apolymorphic term widely used throughout the Old Testament. The primary meaning of **mishpat** is "judgment." **Mishpat** refers to the decision of a judge (**sophet**). The judgment of Yahweh is his **mishpat** (Zp. 2:3). **Mishpat** may be used to refer to the law in a general sense (Lv. 24:22). In Psalm 1:5 **mishpat** refers to the place where judgment is administered. The word can mean "conformity" with the resultant meaning of "mode of life" (Jr. 13:12).

Interestingly, Herzberg claims that in the eighth century literature **mishpat** acquired a new meaning.³ It lost its juridical sense for an ethical tone and took on a distinct relationship to the poor. Allen calls **mishpat** "a sense of responsibility toward weaker members of society lest they go to the wall."⁴ Wolff concurs by saying that justice to Micah means "rescue for those who are endangered, help for those who have been hurt, surcease to those who have suffered violence."⁵

The verb "to know" (**lada'ath**) means knowledge manifesting itself in praxis. The public officials were denounced for failing to uphold the rights of the innocent, the poor, the oppressed, and weaker members of society. The heads of Israel knew the right judgment but purposely perverted it for their own gain.

Years earlier, Amos admonished the leaders to "hate the evil and love the good" (5:15). The leaders, on the contrary, perverted justice, hating good and loving evil (Mi. 3:2). Using the metaphorical language of cannibalism Micah accused the leaders of tearing the flesh of the people, stripping their skin, breaking their bones, and chopping their meat for the kettle (3:2, 3). In Allen's words the leaders participated in a "tyranny of evil."⁶ Wolff conjectures that the mode of economic production was not "adjusted according to what is right for the protection of the weak but according to the financial calculation of the powerful."⁷ Miranda claims that injustice is based on the differentiating property acquired by just such violence and spoliation.⁸

In the second strophe, Micah accused the cultic prophets of leading the people astray and divining for money (vv. 5-7). In contrast to the corrupt prophets, Micah proclaimed:

On the other hand I am filled with power--
With the spirit of the Lord--
And with justice (**mishpat**) and courage
To make known to Jacob his rebellious act,
Even to Israel his sin. (3:8)

Mays observes that **mishpat** in this context refers to a sense for what is just according to the will of Yahweh.⁹ Wolff says that it was the sense of justice that gave Micah orientation to his work.¹⁰ Von Rad says that the preaching of the prophets, their proclamation of God's law, became "charismatic."¹¹ This charismatic sense of justice characterized Micah as a true prophet in contrast to the false prophets. The prophet called sin sin. Micah showed that justice consisted in calling the good good and evil evil. Herzberg points out that **mishpat** was the orientation of the will to good rather than evil.¹² Micah focused on the sin of the nation and the judgment that would follow.

Micah prophesied the inevitable judgment that would come upon the nation because of its political graft, economic oppression, and religious hypocrisy. The heads of Jacob abhorred justice (3:9), and built Zion with bloodshed (v. 10). The priests instructed for a price and the prophets prostituted their ministry (v. 11). Hence Zion was doomed to be plowed into a heap of ruins (v. 12).

Micah proclaimed **mishpat** as justice on the side of the poor, the innocent, and the oppressed. The prophets demanded justice out of a concern for those oppressed, not merely for justice's sake. Berkovits says that justice is done not that justice prevail but that life prevail.¹³ Western power structures follow the dictum of Thrasymachos in Book One of the "Republic," that justice is whatever is advantageous to the stronger. The biblical demand for justice, on the other hand, denounces the oppressor and takes the side of the oppressed. In the dialectic of the oppressor/oppressed, biblical justice may be said to be whatever is advantageous to the oppressed. Yet, the oppressed must be guided by a sense of justice in order to struggle for a just society.

Micah was empowered by a sense of justice, a discernment for what is right engendered by the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

The sense of justice enabled the prophet to make known the sins of the nation's political leaders. Likewise, Hispanic-Americans, empowered by a sense for what is just, will be able to develop a political consciousness and take political action to institute reforms, and denounce the wicked power structures that discriminate against the Spanish-speaking people and do not give them a voice in the decision-making process. Marxist ideologies and the socio-economic sciences may provide the Hispanic community with descriptive-analytic tools, but not with a sense of justice, without which the prophetic denouncement of injustice cannot proceed.

Ontological grounding in love

In a dialogical context, reminiscent of the case-suit or lawsuit, Micah summed up the essence of true ethical religion:

He has told you O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice (**mishpat**), to love kindness (**hesed**)
And to walk humbly with your God. (6:8)

Yahweh brought forth a case-suit against the people (vv. 1, 2) and recounted to them the great saving act in their history – the exodus (v. 4). He instructed them to remember the "righteous acts of Yahweh" (v. 5). The sacrifices they offered to present to Yahweh revealed that they had no true knowledge of God (vv. 6, 7). Therefore, the prophet directed them to the true cultus demanded by Yahweh (v. 8). Allen says that it would be unfair to conclude that Micah replaced the cultus with social ethics.¹⁴ Miranda, on the other hand, thinks that it is clear that Yahweh requires justice in the place of religious rites.¹⁵ Von Rad states that what took place in the cult could be the **mishpat** of God. "The **mishpat** of God in human life was the foundation stone of the cult."¹⁶

Mays says that to do **mishpat** is to uphold the right according to the tradition given by Yahweh "both in legal proceedings and in the conduct of life."¹⁷ Wolff interprets the passage in terms of praxis: "putting into effect a just social order."¹⁸ Jeremiah insisted that the praxis of justice consisted in the concrete historical realities of protecting the alien, the orphan, and the widow (7:5, 6). Deuteronomy emphasized God's insistence upon justice (1:17; 10:18; 32:4). Amos equated justice with seeking the good and not the evil (5:14, 15). Micah rooted the praxis of justice in lovingkindness (**hesed**) (6:8).

Tillich based justice ontologically on the principle of love. He also suggested that justice in the Old Testament is "expressed in the divine grace which forgives in order to

reunite."¹⁹ Justice based upon love recognizes the needy and acts upon the condition of the poor "as an obligation upon conduct which is meant in the expression 'to love mercy' (**hesed**)."²⁰ Acting in love to the fatherless and the widow also means debilitating the power of the oppressor. Berkovits asks, "But how else is the oppressed to be relieved if not by judging the oppressor and his ability to oppress."²¹ The biblical demand for justice is rooted in love for the other. Justice in Scripture is not an idealistic notion nor is it ahistorical or apolitical. (Western conceptions of justice are to be criticized for their idealistic nature.) Biblical justice is to be manifested in concrete, historical, political realities —maintaining the rights of the dispossessed people of society, upholding a just wage and a just price, denouncing the sins of the political leaders, and struggling for a just society. But these acts are not to be performed out of hatred for the oppressor or out of zeal for ideological conceptions of justice; rather, the praxis of justice arises out of love for the other. The struggle for justice working out of love can overcome the dialectic of the oppressor/oppressed.

The eschatological hope of liberation

In a passage not considered Micah's, hope is expressed for the liberating execution of justice (**mishpat**) from God:

I will bear the indignation of the Lord

Because I have sinned against Him,

Until he pleads my case and executes justice (**mishpat**)
for me.

He will bring me out to light,

And I will see his righteousness (**tsedaqah**). (7:9)

Jacob understands **mishpat** in this text as a manifestation of Yahweh's righteousness that will put an end to sin.²² This passage reveals the true salvific nature of justice in the Old Testament —justice is to save the unfortunate from injustice. Justice and salvation are equated in the Old Testament. Justice (**mishpat**) and salvation (**y'shuah**) are used synonymously in a parallelism in Trito-Isaiah: "We look for **mishpat** but there is none, for **y'shuah** but it is far from us." (59:11). **Mishpat** is justice that does not break but liberates, "and if it breaks it is in order to deliver."²³ The blindfolded maiden holding a balance does not symbolize the **mishpat** of Yahweh. The justice of Yahweh, Jacob points out, extends an arm of salvation to help the "wretched stretched out on the ground, while with the other arm he pushes away the one who causes the oppression."²⁴ Justice, then, saves the poor from the

corporate structures of technologically developed nations—delivers the oppressed from the cruel hand of the oppressor. Yet, God's justice will reveal itself eschatologically.

The believer expressed hope for the final execution of justice that would put an end to the oppressing conditions of injustice. He realized that justice was in the making but not yet consummated (already but not yet). He hoped for his vindication and deliverance. Yet, in his hope he possessed liberation as anticipation. God's **mishpat** is present in hope. It is present in the dialectic process of history. The **mishpat** awaited for was no mere utopian dream; on the contrary, **mishpat** contains a historical-political content as its core, a justice that will deliver the body politic from differentiating class structures and plead the case of the innocent historically at the eschaton. The just society, to be revealed eschatologically, will be established and governed on the basis of God's **mishpat**.

Rejecting western conceptions of justice—treating equals equally and unequals unequally (Aristotle), might is right (Thrasymachos), natural law theory (Aquinas), that which works the greatest good for the greatest number of people (Bentham), and the pragmatism of the consumer society—and appropriating the biblical concept of **mishpat**, "el pueblo de Dios" can confidently take up the struggle to set up a just society, knowing that it will be eschatologically vindicated.

Notes

¹ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. xviii.

² Leslie C. Allen, "The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah," *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, edited by R. K. Harrison, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), p. 309.

³ H. W. Hertzberg, "Die Entwicklung des Begriffes **mishpat** im Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, (14 Mai 1923): 274.

⁴ Op. cit., p. 273.

⁵ Hans Walter Wolff, *Micah the Prophet*, translated by Ralph D. Gehrke, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), p. 75.

⁶Op. cit., p. 317.

⁷Op. cit., p. 77.

⁸*Marx and the Bible*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1974), p.

19. Quoted by Andrew J. Kirk in *Liberation Theology: An Evangelical View from the Third World*, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), p. 84.

⁹"Micah: A Commentary," *The Old Testament Library*, edited by Bernhard W. Anderson, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), p. 85.

¹⁰Op. cit., p. 75.

¹¹*Old Testament Theology*, vol. I, translated by D. M. G. Stalker, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 94.

¹²Op. cit., p. 276.

¹³Op. cit., p. 204.

¹⁴Op. cit., p. 374.

¹⁵Cited by Andrew J. Kirk, op. cit., p. 84.

¹⁶Op. cit., p. 242.

¹⁷Op. cit., p. 125.

¹⁸Op. cit., p. 106.

¹⁹*Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analysis and Ethical Applications*, (New York: Oxford, 1970), pp. 55, 57.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 125.

²¹"The Biblical Meaning of Justice," *Judaism*, vol. 18, no. 2, (Spring 1969), 192.

²²*Theology of the Old Testament*, translated by Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock, (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 101.

²³Op. cit., p. 206.

²⁴Op. cit., pp. 99, 100.

Resumen:

A base de un estudio de Miqueas, Candelaria discute la idea de justicia en los profetas, y la contrasta con otros modos de entender la justicia. La justicia en la Biblia no se basa en nuestro concepto de lo que es justo, sino en un verdadero amor hacia los oprimidos, y en la esperanza en el cumplimiento de los designios divinos.

El significado de esta hora

Samuel Pagán

En el 1928, y aun sin manifestarse ni conocerse las máximas dimensiones del Holocausto, un joven erudito judío analizó la realidad del momento. En un ensayo breve, pero penetrante y creador, el Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel analizó su percepción de la realidad. Su equipo ideológico provenía de su trasfondo religioso ortodoxo y de sus estudios del Talmud, la Cábala, la Biblia, y la filosofía.

El mundo del momento estaba lleno de culpa, desconfianza, agonía y terror. El ambiente era de guerra, persecución, injusticia y desesperanza. Los seres humanos se tornaron contra sus compañeros, y olvidando su imagen de Dios se convirtieron en fantasmas, perseguidores, monstruos. La historia, que según Heschel es el conjunto de esfuerzos y errores humanos, se convirtió en el lugar del juicio divino. El humano, cautivo en su viaje desesperado hacia el egoísmo, no entendió la importancia de la hora, la particularidad del momento, lo determinante del instante.

En ese peregrinar suicida hacia el odio, Dios quedó atrás. El nombre de Dios fue objeto de estudio, pero los grandes principios de los profetas se desconocieron. Dios quedó cautivo en templos y catedrales. Se ofreció lo mejor de la tierra, se ofrendó el ingenio de las mentes, y hasta se invirtió la vida, en causas trágicas y en movimientos de perdición. El silencio alto y resonante sustituyó a la voz noble y valiente. La inacción superó al compromiso. La inercia se sobrepuso a la creatividad. La parálisis del ingenio triunfó sobre los sueños. La indiferencia opacó la contrucción noble del futuro.

Para Heschel la experiencia religiosa no es un apéndice en la vida. Lo sobrenatural, el misterio, la mística y la revelación son parte integral del mundo cotidiano. La experiencia religiosa no se limita a un análisis racional de la fenomenología

de la religión, ni a la construcción racional de una ideología religiosa. Lo primero sería una sicología de la religión, y lo segundo una filosofía de la religión. La relación dinámica, penetrante, profunda y continua entre el humano y Dios: eso es la religión para Heschel. Es la respuesta a las interrogantes últimas del humano, e impacta todos los niveles de la vida. La experiencia religiosa abarca la situación humana total, la realidad que nos circunda, las experiencias que nos afectan, la historia que nos da el marco conceptual y vivencial.

Este concepto de religión depende de un criterio teológico: Quién es Dios. En el mundo de las ideas de Heschel Dios no es una abstracción filosófica, ni una idea más en el complejo mundo de las abstracciones, ni una creación humana para explicar la vida. Dios no está jugando en el mundo de lo intangible, irreal e imaginario, ni se desarrolla como producto de la inventiva humana en su deseo de entender la realidad y de tener un entendimiento cosmológico de la existencia. El Dios de Heschel está profunda y continuamente interesado en el ser humano. Este no es un objeto rechazado o despreciado por la divinidad, sino el objeto mismo de la revelación. El humano intenta conocer a Dios, porque Dios le conoce primero. Dios conoce la totalidad de la vida humana: su historia, realidad, anhelos y aspiraciones. Dios conoce al humano y el mundo que le rodea. Y mientras Dios nos conoce en nuestra totalidad, nosotros le conocemos solamente en dos niveles: sabemos que Dios nos conoce, y sabemos lo que Dios requiere de nosotros.

Esta relación dialéctica entre el humano y Dios le brinda a Heschel el marco para la intimidad entre la religión y la experiencia diaria y cotidiana. El humano debe trascender el nivel del egoísmo, para responder con amor, devoción y responsabilidad en la vida. El descubrimiento y aceptación de las demandas de Dios es la base para el comportamiento noble, el trato justo, el establecimiento del derecho y la vida comprometida con la verdad. El entendimiento de que el ser humano es un reflejo de la divinidad es la motivación para vivir en consonancia con y de acuerdo a las grandes demandas y postulados revelados a través de los clásicos profetas bíblicos. La sensibilidad de estar abiertos y comunicarnos con alguien que nos trasciende; la actitud de buscar, entender, dialogar e intimar con lo eterno; y la fidelidad en esos momentos de diálogo, revelación, intimidad y correspondencia: eso es el acto de fe.

Con ese marco filosófico y teológico, el Rabi Heschel analiza el significado de un momento especial en la historia humana: el año 1938. La falta de comunicación con lo eterno produce una confusión de los valores. El bien y el mal se confunden hasta tal punto que el apetito humano busca adorar la fuerza, la violencia, la opresión y la injusticia. La guerra no es ya una calamidad que se debe rehuir, sino la finalidad, la meta, el objetivo, la razón de ser. Con la confusión de los valores, la ciencia se ha vuelto un instrumento para la destrucción; los parlamentos, los congresos y las cámaras legislativas se han hecho púlpitos para la hipocresía; la tecnología, un aliado de la contaminación; la religión, una excusa y pretexto para blanquear la conciencia. La conveniencia ha venido a sustituir a la santidad; el éxito ha ocupado el lugar de la fidelidad; el poder ha opacado al amor; la información y la estadística sustituyen a la sabiduría; y las modas han eclipsado las tradiciones. La revelación divina se descuenta para vivir de acuerdo con los valores que dicta el egoísmo. Roto el diálogo con lo eterno, los valores divinos se echan a un lado. Sin intimidad con Dios el humano está cautivo del egoísmo que produce destrucción, contaminación, guerra, bombas atómicas, injusticia, anarquía y falta de respeto al ser humano, que es reflejo de la naturaleza divina.

En su análisis de la hora Heschel entiende que la desconfianza social está directamente relacionada con la incomunicación entre el humano y Dios. Es un coeficiente de la ruptura del diálogo humano-divino, de la anarquía y la pérdida de los valores. Es un resultado de la falta de compromiso con lo eterno, que lleva a abandonar los derechos humanos, y a una guerra fratricida que busca conseguir la paz, pero sin justicia.

Esta realidad que preambuló la Segunda Guerra Mundial y que propició el Holocausto se repite en la historia. La injusticia, el armamentismo, el uso de la tecnología y de la investigación científica con fines bélicos, la contaminación, la falta de respeto hacia el ser humano, el hambre, la miseria, el uso indebido de la ley y del poder, y la confusión en los valores, todo esto es agenda continua, cotidiana y creciente en nuestra sociedad. La sociedad contemporánea va en una carrera desenfrenada hacia un futuro desconocido, con valores confusos y prioridades invertidas. Esa condición ha producido cataclismos en generaciones anteriores. La sociedad que se deja llevar por una sed insaciable de poder, lujo, prestigio y fuerza se olvida de la razón misma de su existencia. El objetivo último, que es una vida en armonía, justicia y paz, se

ha cambiado por una vida de consumerismo, conveniencia, control y manipulación. El humano ha dejado de mirar a Dios como fuente de inspiración, compromiso y revelación, y ha puesto su mirada en la energía atómica como fuerza invencible y temible.

Este es el marco de referencia para hacer la teología contemporánea. Las realidades sociales, económicas, políticas y espirituales de la sociedad actual son fuente primaria para el análisis teológico. El significado de esta hora se entiende a la luz de las dinámicas que afectan al humano y su ambiente. En el pensamiento de Heschel el ser humano y su realidad total son preocupación e interés de Dios.

Como respuesta a la realidad humana, el análisis teológico no puede ser un ejercicio ideológico o una calistenia del mundo de las ideas. La teología que tradicionalmente se conoce como monástica y espiritual, que busca la santidad y la perfección, o como una disciplina intelectual que une la fe y la razón, tiene una nueva definición y dimensión. Según Gustavo Gutiérrez, una nueva forma de hacer teología contemporánea es hacer una reflexión crítica sobre la "praxis". Esta "praxis" se entiende como la acción histórica que busca transformar la realidad social; es un instrumento o poder para cambiar las condiciones presentes. En ese análisis crítico o teología de liberación, el ser humano toma control de su destino y rechaza la condición de pobreza y tragedia, para vivir con dignidad, en un proceso continuo de creatividad y liberación. Este proceso no culmina con un nuevo orden social o con un cambio en las estructuras, sino que es un viaje ininterrumpido hacia el futuro, donde el ser humano disfruta los verdaderos valores de la vida y la razón de ser de su existencia.

Posiblemente una de las mayores contribuciones de la teología de liberación —o de las teologías de liberación— es su entendimiento de que la teología y la realidad humana y social no pueden divorciarse. La teología no es el esfuerzo de intelectuales desconectados de la vida diaria, sino el diálogo continuo y retador que busca entender la realidad y contribuir al proceso de liberación del ser humano. La teología no se hace en las bibliotecas de los grandes centros educativos del mundo, sino que se hace en el camino. Se hace teología en la vida y realidad de los individuos y de los pueblos. Se hace teología en el sufrimiento, en la desesperanza, en la angustia, en el dolor y en el anhelo continuo y creciente de salvación y liberación. Se hace teología tomando en serio al ser humano: sus aspira-

ciones, frustraciones, valores, potenciales, y su imagen de Dios.

Este concepto de hacer teología como reacción a la realidad humana está cerca del pensamiento de Heschel. Para él, la religión comienza con "las preguntas de Dios y las respuestas del humano". El ser humano no llega a Dios a través del conocimiento o de la inteligencia, sino sintiendo y palpando los actos continuos y sistemáticos de la divinidad, que busca relacionarse con el humano. Este último es el objetivo continuo del interés de Dios. Dios está interesado en el humano, y como producto de ese interés se revela. La revelación para Heschel no es el acto que interfiere con el curso natural de los procesos humanos, sino el acto de producir un nuevo momento creador en el curso de la historia. Es el proceso del descubrimiento de la voluntad de Dios en la intimidad y en el diálogo entre el humano y Dios. Es el instante donde Dios triunfa en su interés por alcanzarnos.

Para las teologías de la liberación, la sociedad y el análisis crítico de las fuerzas que operan en el mundo son la materia prima para la teología. Para Heschel, la teología nace como una revelación de Dios, aunque está preocupada por todos los niveles de la vida humana. Para las teologías de liberación la palabra clave es "praxis"; para Heschel, la palabra clave es "revelación"; para las teología de liberación la salvación de la humanidad es el objetivo, al igual que para Heschel.

Para culminar su ensayo sobre "El significado de esta hora", el Dr. Heschel hace unos comentarios soteriológicos muy importantes. Para él la salvación de la humanidad no está en tanques, aviones, armas, ni guerras. La confianza en estos instrumentos del mal producirá más violencia y caos. Para Heschel, Dios espera por nosotros para redimir el mundo. Ese proceso de liberación y salvación tendrá lugar cuando se traduzca la experiencia religiosa a la realidad cotidiana de los bancos, las industrias, los congresos, los clubes, los tribunales, los comités, los hogares y los teatros. La comunicación con lo eterno que produce el descubrimiento de la voluntad divina debe traducirse a la vida diaria. La salvación, según Heschel, no es el esfuerzo humano independiente, sino el proceso que descubre que Dios está muy interesado en el bienestar de la humanidad y comisiona al humano a vivir a la altura de esa revelación.

En el 1938 el Rabí Heschel culminó su artículo con un reto a la humanidad. Dios no creó el mundo para envidias,

ambiciones y vanidades. El propósito de Dios es la salvación de la humanidad. Esa voz profética sigue vigente en la sociedad contemporánea.

Summary

In 1938, before the full impact of the War and the Holocaust had taken place, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote a prophetic article on "The Meaning of This Hour." There he argued that the loss of a sense of revelation, and the ensuing deification of egoism, hatred, and violence, threatened God's purpose for humankind. In the present article, parallels are shown between the situation in 1938 and the present situation, showing that Dr. Heschel's warning, proven to be accurate then, is even more valid today. The article also relates and compares Dr. Heschel's basic theological perspective with that of the theologies of liberation.

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In the Depths of the Well, Looking at the Stars

Ariel Zambrano

I never had that experience myself, but during my seminary days in Mexico City one of our teachers told us how a relative had to go down to the bottom of the well to clean it. While he was down there, cut off from the light of the sun, he could see the stars. I have heard of this several times since, in different contexts, so I take it to be true. The lesson for us is that if we want to see the stars, we have to dig deep. That implies persistent hard work, assiduously cleaning our well. Anything less will produce shallow, trivial and futile results.

Although my experience is mainly with colleagues of Arizona and Southern California, I identify with all Hispanic pastors in the struggle and frustration of trying to make the Bible relevant to our own situation. If we want to see the stars, two things are paramount: 1. we must wrestle with the Scriptures; 2. we must know our people – the community in which we live and the church we are shepherding.

This calls to mind the affirmation of José Ortega y Gasset, "I am I, and my circumstance," meaning that a person must always be considered in a social and cultural milieu. We must learn to approach the Bible from the Hispanic circumstance, to think as Hispanics, to find out from our own perspective what the Scriptures are telling us.

This does not mean that we should ignore what the erudite and the sages can teach us. That would be a completely erroneous course. What is necessary is to train ourselves always to take their teaching and discoveries and sift them through our Hispanic mind and culture.

This pursuit is called hermeneutics, as defined by James A. Sanders:

Hermeneutics, from the Greek *ermeneía*, meaning interpretation, translation or explanation; the Greek verb in the Biblical period also meant to proclaim or discourse upon a topic. As used today it signifies (1) the principles, rules, and techniques whereby the interpreter of a text attempts to understand it in its original context; (2) the science of discerning how a thought or event in one cultural context may be understood in a different cultural context; and (3) the art of making the transfer.¹

For our purposes, numbers 2 and 3 suggest our task: how can the Scriptures be understood in our Hispanic context? What methods, tools and techniques can we use to make them relevant to our people? This twofold task demands all our energy and ability as pastors of Hispanic congregations. How well do we know our people and their "circumstance"?

Let me explain what I mean, at least in the context of Southern California where I live. It is a matter of record that the Hispanic population is the fastest growing ethnic group in Southern California. According to the 1978 census, there were 19 million Hispanics, including the undocumented, in the United States. Since 1970 Hispanics in Los Angeles have outnumbered Blacks and they now outnumber Whites, who have declined from 80.9% in 1950 to 44.4% in 1980.

A nationwide survey taken in 1978 showed that 23% of Mexican-Americans had less than five years of schooling. The school dropout rate among Hispanics is high – one informed source estimates it at 42% – and many of those who leave school enroll elsewhere – in youth gangs. An estimated 13,000 young Hispanics belong to such groups in Los Angeles County alone.

In my own city, with a population of 20,787, we have thirty churches, three of them Hispanic. The household financial status of the inhabitants is revealing: only 5% earn more than \$35,000 annually, and 52% earn less than \$10,000. An analysis of school enrolment figures shows 65% have Hispanic background. Regarding levels of education, only 29% graduate from high school, 15% have from 1 to 7 years of elementary education and 12% go only as far as the eighth grade.

This is only a partial description of my wider context. A similar but more detailed description of my immediate context, my congregation and community, would be necessary for me to be able to work out an adequate hermeneutics.

Sanders speaks of hermeneutics as

the mid-point between the Bible's stability and adaptability as canon. In this sense, hermeneutics is the art of interpreting the Bible for the ongoing believing communities. It is the means whereby the professional interpreters within those communities demonstrate the Bible's relevance and help the faithful (and the doubting) to hear its message for their time and situation.²

The hard work of hermeneutics will require that we change our way of sermon preparation. Instead of week after week looking hectically and hastily for "a good passage," reading it casually, consulting a commentary (most likely in English) and then writing down (if not outright copying) some sort of an outline, we must see the passage in the context of the congregation we will be facing next Sunday. What causes are they involved in? Where are they hurting? Who has been laid off? Who hospitalized or bereaved? What world or community events have made an impact on them? What questions will they bring with them? In other words, do we go to our pulpits each week with a clear understanding of the "circumstance" of our people?

Again Sanders stresses the need to adapt and interpret:

Actually, whenever a text intended for one context is applied to another or different context, some kind of hermeneutics is necessary to adapt the text to the new situation. Even the uninformed who think they are simply being "faithful to the text" when they seek to read it "accurately" are nonetheless using hermeneutics, if for no other reason than the fact that they are of necessity using their own minds in reading the text. How can they do otherwise? And those minds are of necessity shaped by the culture in which they were nurtured.³

This has been dramatically illustrated by the experience of Padre Ernesto Cardenal and the fisherfolk of Solentiname.

We should be seriously concerned about the Bible and equally concerned about our people. In fact, the Bible will be only a book until, by the grace of God, and much sweat and travail on our part, its message is appropriated by the

individuals making up our congregation. This is the supreme goal of all true hermeneutics.

To help us in our task, Juan Luis Segundo offers the "hermeneutic circle". In an illuminating and insightful way he explains:

Firstly, there is our way of experiencing reality, which leads us to ideological suspicion. Secondly, there is the application of our ideological suspicion to the whole ideological superstructure in general and to theology in particular. Thirdly, there comes a new way of experiencing theological reality that leads us to exegetical suspicion, that is, to the suspicion that the prevailing interpretation of the Bible has not taken important pieces of data into account. Fourthly, we have our new hermeneutics, that is, our new way of interpreting the fountainhead of our faith (i.e. Scripture) with the new elements at our disposal.⁴

The importance of the circle for us comes from Segundo's own definition:

Here is a preliminary definition of the hermeneutic circle: it is the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal. "Hermeneutic" means "having to do with interpretation". And the circular nature of this interpretation stems from the fact that each new reality obliges us to interpret the word of God afresh, to change reality accordingly, and then to go back and reinterpret the word of God again, and so on.⁵

This definition makes clear that our task as interpreters of the Word is a constant and permanent one. We should be checking with "suspicion" our circumstance, and with the same "suspicion" we should check our theological and exegetical findings. This is a never-ending task; that is the reason for the circle. This hermeneutic effort is not a line toward a goal; it is a circle because when we might think that we have reached our goal we discover that the situation, the "circumstance" of Ortega y Gasset, has changed and we have to start all over again.

When I was about to finish this article, word came of the death of Dr. John A. Mackay, the beloved teacher of so many of the present pastors and leaders of the Hispanic world. In a letter to Luis Odell, one of those influenced by him, Dr. Mackay leaves us his "testament" or last challenge, which

seems to echo both Ortega and Segundo. A portion of the letter is as follows:

More and more I feel intensely the supreme need of our day in the church and in the world, is an evangelical renewal. By this I mean a new discovery of the Gospel of Christ in its fullest dimension, taking into account the historic facts, the theological reality, the personal experience, the evangelistic zeal and the social concerns with their political implications. These Christian foundations, which have been overlooked and even forgotten, must be rediscovered, proclaimed and applied.⁶

The challenge is before us. God is calling us to preach the Word. Let us do it seriously, with conviction and devotion. Remember, if we want to see the stars, we have to dig deep.

Notes

¹James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume. Keeth Crim, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 402.

²Ibid. p. 404.

³James A Sanders, *God Has a Story Too* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 7.

⁴Ernesto Cardenal, *El Evangelio en Solentiname*, Two Volumes (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1978).

⁵Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1976), p. 9.

⁶Ibid., p. 8.

Resumen:

En el presente ensayo, Zambrano trata de mostrar la importancia que el trabajo hermenéutico tiene para los hispanos, discutiendo la necesidad de tomar en cuenta tanto el texto mismo como nuestra circunstancia particular. Hace esto utilizando los trabajos de James A. Sanders y de Juan Luis Segundo.

Reseña bibliográfica

Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise. Virgilio Elizondo (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983). 147 pp.

Por fin aparece, en forma de libro para el público en general, la tesis doctoral de Virgilio Elizondo sobre el mestizaje y su relación con el anuncio del evangelio. La estructura del libro es simétrica: tres partes principales, cada una con tres capítulos.

La primera parte trata acerca de la experiencia México-americana. El primer capítulo es una introducción histórica al proceso de mestizaje que le he dado origen al pueblo México-americano, y que consiste en dos mestizajes sucesivos: el primero, entre el pueblo aborigen de México y los españoles, y el segundo entre el pueblo mexicano —resultado del primer mestizaje— y el pueblo anglo-americano. El segundo capítulo estudia cómo ese proceso ha de verse a la luz de las relaciones de opresión que han surgido de él. El tercero trata sobre los símbolos religiosos del pueblo México-americano, explicando su relación con la experiencia fundamental de mestizaje, opresión y esperanza de liberación.

La segunda parte es un intento de interpretar el evangelio desde la perspectiva del mestizaje. Aquí aparecen tres temas que luego serán retomados en la tercera parte: Galilea, Jerusalén y la resurrección. Tras un estudio del modo en que Galilea era vista como centro de mestizaje biológico, religioso y cultural tanto por judíos como por gentiles, Elizondo muestra la importancia que el tema de Galilea tiene para el evangelio. Galilea es señal de rechazo, de desprecio, de mestizaje. Jerusalén, en contraste, es centro de poder. Jesús es el galileo,

el rechazado, que se enfrenta con el poder religioso y social de su tiempo. Al parecer, ese poder le destruye. Pero la resurrección muestra que no es así. El triunfo está precisamente en que el amor del Galileo, al parecer destruido por Jerusalén, sobrevive y se impone.

En la tercera parte, Elizondo aplica estos tres principios al pueblo México-americano y su misión. El pueblo México-americano, precisamente por ser mestizo y rechazado, ha sido escogido por Dios. Pero no escogido para su propio bien, sino para llevar el mensaje del amor liberador a Jerusalén. La misión no está sencillamente en regocijarse en la propia fe, sino en llevarla a los centros de poder. En confrontar la opresión. Al hacer esto, no buscamos colocarnos en lugar de los opresores, ni lograr algunas de sus ventajas. Lo que buscamos es una nueva estructura en la que, en presencia de nuestro Padre común, todos nos tratemos como hermanos, como "familia." Los opresores no pueden destruir la opresión. Tampoco pueden hacerlo los oprimidos si sencillamente quieren colocarse ellos en las posiciones de privilegio. Pero sí pueden hacerlo los oprimidos, los mestizos, si se adueñan del amor cristiano, y a base de su propia experiencia de opresión se dedican a luchar contra la opresión misma. En tal lucha, seremos derrotados. Pero nuestra derrota será como la de Jesús en la cruz, pues el "principio de la resurrección" es también cierto para nosotros: El amor universal resulta invencible.

Este libro debe ser leído por todo hispano que se preocupe por el sentido de la fe para hoy. Los que somos protestantes quizá tendremos dificultades con mucho de lo que Elizondo dice acerca de la Virgen de Guadalupe. Pero haríamos mal en leer el libro en términos de las viejas disputas entre católicos y protestantes, y no como está escrito: en términos de un intento de entender mejor el mensaje del evangelio y lo que Dios nos llama a hacer en el mundo contemporáneo. Si dejamos atrás los prejuicios entre católicos y protestantes, veremos en la obra de Elizondo mucho de valor. Pero después tendremos que regresar a la pregunta que Elizondo no plantea, aunque es fundamental para nosotros: ¿qué significa ser protestante e hispano al mismo tiempo? ¿Será acaso un tercer mestizaje, más allá de los dos que Elizondo discute?

J. L. G.

